

Abstract

The Harp in the Old Testament and in the Culture of the Ancient Near East.

This work reviews the chordophones of the harp and lyre categories and their use in the whole Ancient Near East, including Egypt. The structure of each chapter reflects the undertaken methodology: Each chapter opens with a review of available primary and secondary sources; it is divided in separate sections with archaeological and literary material. The review is followed by discussion of the social, religious and symbolic role of a harp in the given culture. Egypt, as well as Israel/Palestine region, is covered each by its own chapter; Mesopotamia, Akkad, Assyria and Babylonia are discussed together in single chapter. In Egypt, the harp play developed in immemorial tradition strongly anchored to the cult, as we can deduce from pictorial relics. Apart from the paintings depicting harp on religious occasions, it was portrayed (almost exclusively) during ceremonies of both intimate and public character. Other studied cultures offer much more wealth of information on their musical aspect. Mesopotamia developed musical notation, large number of sources give sound evidence for significant role of harp and lyre in the cult. Also in the region of today's Israel and Palestine, the chordophones became incorporated in local cult. The Levite harp players accompanying the religious liturgy are mentioned in the Bible several times. This work concludes with discussion of characteristics of the harp usage that are common amongst the studied cultures, mutually influencing each other. These include prophetic and cultic activity, and symbolism of the death, either in its physical or spiritual sense.

Keywords

Old Testament, ancient history, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Ugarit, ancient Israel, music, harp, lyre